

CD 2013--10-11



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

2012-13
season

Sunday, January 27, 2013
7:30 pm. Walter Hall

NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL
deVah quartet

PROGRAM

- P.C. ①
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Ballad for the Passing of Time | Liza McLellan (for deVah) |
| 2. String Quartet No 2 (2011) | Joseph Corey Schenck |
| 3. String Quartet No 1 (2012) | Laura Silberberg |

Sharon Lee, Emily Hau, violins
Shannon Knights, viola
Liza McLellan, cello

INTERMISSION

- L Talk
- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Black Angels (1970) | George Crumb |
| 2. Nos Tenebris Angelis Ascéndit | Liza McLellan (for deVah) |

Emily Hau, Sharon Lee, violins
Yunior Lopez, viola
Liza McLellan, cello

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet No. 2

JOSEPH COREY SCHENCK

String Quartet No. 2 in G minor was composed for Toronto's deVah quartet in 2010-2011. The work was influenced by the passing of my father in January 2011 and my cousin in October 2010. The quartet, as a whole, is structured in a loose sonata form with the Andante and Andantino movements acting as first and second themes, respectively, with the slower Adagio as a development, and the fourth as a recapitulation featuring motives from the first two movements.

The first movement, *Andante tenebroso*, portrays violent and manic contrasts in dark and light in which the darkness takes control. Its motto, consisting of an ascending tritone and minor second, is the building block for the beginning of each movement. These unresolved dissonances continue to reflect the painful tenebroso of the nights, and the respite of the least amount of sleep only for the chaos to occur over and over.

The *Andantino impetuoso* is a misplaced scherzo-like movement and represents those feelings of confusion and hopelessness in which delusional laughter acts as a temporary reprieve from the initial senses of pain and confusion. The motto is heard in various procedures such as inversions, and with diverse techniques (*col legno battuto jeté*).

Feelings of numbness and despair are evoked in the *Adagio desolato* third movement. The score indicates to the performer "growing out of nothing..." as the quartet begin in unison on middle C and move indolently stepwise in search of harmony derived from the motto. The slow harmonic rhythm creates an atmosphere of isolation, while non-traditional usage of the bow contributes to the growth of the movement.

The finale, *Lento misterioso*, recalls the initial statements of the motto from the first and second movements. The music returns to the previous chaotic and tenebroso conflict. This reprise eventually resolves the original motto's tension to G minor as the work fades away into oblivion.

Joseph Corey Schenck was born in Dallas on 6th August 1969. He attended the University of Tulsa, receiving a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Composition (1991). At the Moores School of Music, University of Houston he received a Master of Music degree in Composition (2002). During his composition studies he has had masterclasses with Lukas Foss, William Bolcom, and Samuel Adler. He was president of SIREN at the Moores School and assistant director of both the GNU Music Ensemble at TU & the AURA Contemporary Ensemble at UH. As a professor at San Jacinto College, he teaches music theory and composition while presiding over the composer's alliance, ORPHEUS. Some of his prominent compositions include *Three Pieces for Two Trumpets*, *Piano Variations*, *Four Pieces for Flute*, *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, three works for Pierrot ensemble including *Milk & Honey*, *The Nightmare*, and *Three Poems by Emily Dickinson*, and over one hundred songs with recording artists Pangaea, The Reckoning, and Artica. His songs, guitar and keyboard playing can be

heard on PANGAEA's *The Rite of Passage* (1997), *Welcome to the Theatre* (1999), and *A Time & A Place* (2002), and THE RECKONING's self-titled album (2005). With well over two hundred compositions in his catalog, his music has been performed regularly in North America, Europe, South America, Asia, and Australia. He is a member of BMI, SCI, Texas Society of Music Theory, HFA, and the Society of Music Theory.

String Quartet No.1 (2012)

LAURA SILBERBERG

This is a three-movement work that explores popular musical idioms within the classical string quartet.

Laura Silberberg is a Doctoral student in music composition at the University of Toronto. She has composed music in a variety of genres including orchestral, chamber, choral, electroacoustic and top 40/popular music. Laura's compositions and piano improvisations have been featured live on CBC Radio's *Here and Now* and the *Metro Morning Show*. Her most recent CBC interview in April 2012 focused on piano improvisation while accompanying silent films.

Laura is a nine-time winner of the International Amadeus Songwriting Competition. She has received several scholarships from the University of Toronto for academic and musical excellence, including the prestigious William and Phyllis Waters Graduating Award as well as four Ontario Graduate Scholarships.

Laura is a professional accompanist for silent films screened at the TIFF Bell Lightbox Theatre and has performed at the Toronto International Film Festival as well as the Toronto Silent Film Festival. Laura was honoured by *Maclean's Magazine* as one of 50 up and coming young Canadians under 30.

Black Angels (Images I)

"Thirteen images from the dark land"

GEORGE CRUMB

Things were turned upside down. There were terrifying things in the air ... they found their way into Black Angels. - George Crumb, 1990

Black Angels is probably the only quartet to have been inspired by the Vietnam War. The work draws from an arsenal of sounds including shouting, chanting, whistling, whispering, gongs, maracas, and crystal glasses. The score bears two inscriptions: in tempore belli (in time of war) and "Finished on Friday the Thirteenth, March, 1970".

Black Angels was conceived as a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world. The numerous quasi-programmatic allusions in the work are therefore symbolic, although the essential polarity - God versus Devil - implies more than a purely metaphysical reality. The image of the

“black angel” was a conventional device used by early painters to symbolize the fallen angel.

The underlying structure of *Black Angels* is a huge arch-like design which is suspended from the three “Threnody” pieces. The work portrays a voyage of the soul. The three stages of this voyage are Departure (fall from grace), Absence (spiritual annihilation) and Return (redemption).

The numerological symbolism of *Black Angels*, while perhaps not immediately perceptible to the ear, is nonetheless quite faithfully reflected in the musical structure. These “magical” relationships are variously expressed; e.g., in terms of length, groupings of single tones, durations, patterns of repetition, etc. An important pitch element in the work – descending E, A, and D-sharp – also symbolizes the fateful numbers 7-13. At certain points in the score there occurs a kind of ritualistic counting in various languages, including German, French, Russian, Hungarian, Japanese and Swahili.

There are several allusions to tonal music in *Black Angels*: a quotation from Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden” quartet

(in the *Pavana Lachrymae* and also faintly echoed on the last page of the work); an original *Sarabanda*, which is stylistically synthetic; the sustained B-major tonality of *God-Music*; and several references to the Latin sequence *Dies Irae* (“Day of Wrath”). The work abounds in conventional musical symbolisms such as the *Diabolus in Musica* (the interval of the tritone) and the *Trillo Di Diavolo* (the “Devil’s Trill”, after Tartini).

The amplification of the stringed instruments in *Black Angels* is intended to produce a highly surrealistic effect. This surrealism is heightened by the use of certain unusual string effects, e.g., pedal tones (the intensely obscene sounds of the *Devil-Music*); bowing on the “wrong” side of the strings (to produce the viol-consort effect); trilling on the strings with thimble-capped fingers. The performers also play maracas, tam-tams and water-tuned crystal goblets, the latter played with the bow for the “glass-harmonica” effect in *God-Music*.

Program note from composer’s website

DEVAH QUARTET

The name **deVah** is derived from the Sanskrit word for “Dark Heavenly Being”. It pays tribute to the experimental yet infamously groundbreaking composition *Black Angels* composed for electric string quartet by George Crumb. Brought together in 2008 by the desire to perform quality chamber music, deVah branched out of the traditional classical box into the multitude of genres navigating through mainstream.

Toronto’s deVah quartet is not your typical string quartet. As newly minted Yamaha Artists in 2011, deVah is comprised of Emily on electric violin, Sharon and Moira on electric 5-string hybrids, Liza on an electric cello capable of multi bass octaves, and guest drums. deVah invents a rich texture of sound utilizing various non-acoustic modifying tools creating a different tone and dimension to their music. Set apart from any stereotypical mold, deVah is continuously evolving and recreating itself, innovating the quartet world in electric string artistry.

deVah has released numerous original rock charts adorned by the audiences in their unplugged concerts, and are soon to be recorded on their debut album coming in 2013. In addition to their creative success, deVah has also made notoriety in covering many of the greatest hits in musical history. The group itself has collaborated with some of the most talented artists in contemporary music including: Diana Krall, Peter Gabriel, Brian Wilson, Barbra Streisand, Josh Groban, Molly Johnson, Feist, Sarah McLachlan, Chantal Kreviazuk, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Kanye West, K-OS and Emily Haines.

The ladies of deVah, although diverse and explorative in their music, possess an impressive resume in their training. Having studied at the Glenn Gould School, Indiana University, McGill University, University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, and the University of Houston, the musicians value and take pride in their classical roots.